

## The Gurnet - Part III

By HERBERT BOARDMAN

(Written in 1935)

The appearance of the Gurnet 50 years ago is well revealed in an oil painting made in 1885 by Mr. C. Drew now in the possession of the writer. The buildings included the twin lights, the home of the lighthouse keeper, painted white; life saving station, small, gray and pitchroofed; the government homestead and barn, for the use of the captain of the life-saving crew; the present Murphy and Willoughby-Courtney cottages, Harvey Ransome's historic Webster cottage and another small cottage on the bay shore; John Batchelder's house; the old schoolhouse. And of course the farmhouse itself with the barn and well house in front, painted white with green trimming. On the bluff stood a rustic summer house and the pavilion dance hall with open shutters. Mr. Drew's painting also shows a white excursion steamer rounding the point and a red whistling buoy in the water near the boat.

The whistling buoy was located about a mile off the point on a submerged ledge and its monotonous moan could be heard as far away as Duxbury when the direction of the wind was right. The color was changed from red to black and white in later years and has now been replaced by a bell buoy.

Although the Gurnet covers about 27 acres, the farm, having a large area of pasture land, beach and salt marsh, comprised, in 1885, about 60 acres. The principal structures were the 19-room house, large barn, well-house, pavilion and usual out buildings. Painted white with green trimmings originally, it was later painted red and in more recent years gray with red or green trimming and yellow or green blinds. The first floor of the house consisted of a comfortable living room, with a corresponding room across the hall, a spacious dining room, a large kitchen with a laundry, woodshed and ice house beyond. The second floor was given over to the sleeping chambers and there were also some partially finished sleeping rooms in the attic. The second floor reveals the 2 periods of architecture; the front rooms being low studded as in Colonial style and the rear portion in the high studded 1870 style.

Mr. Boardman finished off the open pavilion into a dance hall with large shutters which could be opened or closed, weather permitting. The southern end was partitioned off into a living room with a fireplace and sleeping chambers opened off a balcony



At left, 2nd Coast Guard Station.

water pond located southwest of the house where Mr. Boardman kept ducks. A creek of great depth flowed through the marsh into Duxbury Bay making a safe anchorage for small boats.

When Mr. Boardman opened his farmhouse for summer boarders on Memorial Day 1885, the first guests to register were Mr. and Mrs. Orin Gray and family of Hyde Park, Walter Cogswell of Boston and Mrs. E. Tedford.

Mrs. Louise (Holmes) Gray, 90-year-old widow of Orin Gray, with her son Elville and daughter Clara Louise are still summer residents of the Gurnet as they own a cottage opposite the Coast Guard Station. For 50 years they have been associated with the Gur-

net, a fact worthy of special interest.

In 1885 the lighthouse keeper was Capt. Edward Gorham and the captain of the life-saving station was John Flavel Holmes (1831-1902), a native of Plymouth and a descendant of the Mayflower Pilgrims. Capt. Holmes was an outstanding figure on the Gurnet for 20 years, a worthy seaman and an exemplary character who won the confidence, affection, and admiration of all who knew him. He was described as a large man with gray moustache and black hair. He came with his family to live in the government house provided for him around 1880. The family consisted of the captain, his estimable wife, who was before her marriage Laura Ann



Harlow of Plymouth (also of Mayflower stock), their daughters, Mary, Flavella (Ella), Myra, Anne and a son Albert Frederick Holmes. Anna passed away early in life. Mary Holmes married James Payne and later James Watson. By her first husband she had one son, Arthur Payne. Ella taught in the little Gurnet schoolhouse.

On March 1, 1885 the personnel of the life-saving station sent Mr. Boardman a letter defining their goodwill and intent to help in any way possible their new neighbors, signed by John Holmes, Anderson Richmond, Joseph Thurston, Benjamin Manter, George Delaney, Austin Keene and James Snow. Such was the calibre of the Gurnet coast guardsmen of 50 years ago.

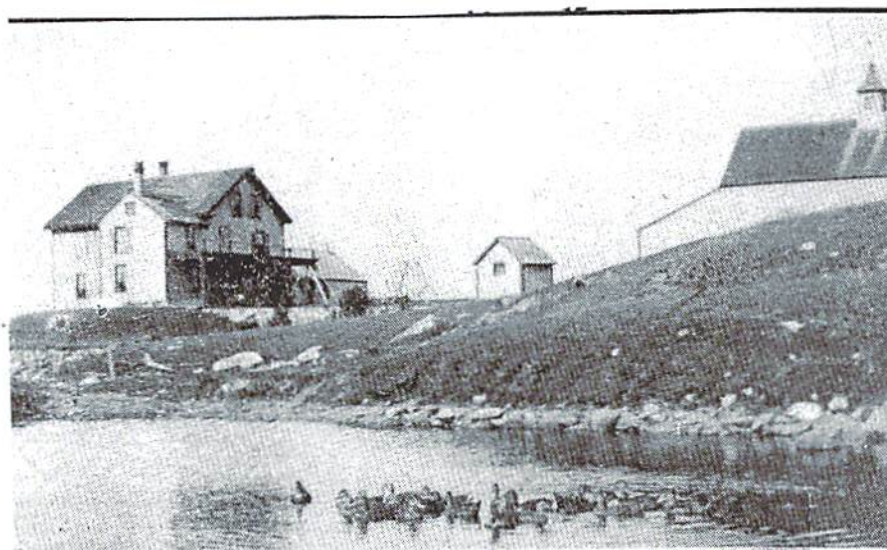
On the 4th of July, Elville Gray registered as a guest, joining his parents who had come down

Memorial Day. On July 9, Mr. Boardman's elder son, Arthur, returned from several years' work in the south. As he approached in a sailboat from Duxbury his first impression was most favorable and his regard deepened with the years.

The other 2 children, Emma Florence and Joseph Lafayette Jr. were also victims of the Gurnet's quiet charm. The younger son was called Fayette or Fay as Mrs. Boardman disliked nicknames and thought by using his middle name she would forestall his being called "Joe." He had a little boat and together with the other boys, Fred Holmes and Arthur Payne, spent many happy carefree days sailing and fishing.

Among other guests were a family of Kettelles from Boston. Emma Kettelle was organist at Tremont Temple. The family of Frank Mitchell, intimate friends of the Boardmans, came to see the new estate. Pearl Mitchell gained great renown as a swimmer. The Peltons of Dedham, who later bought the present Murphy cottage, were also early guests. The family included Florentine, Mabel, Paul and Clarence Pelton.

On July 9, Arthur Boardman brought down a girlfriend from Boston, Georgie Webber. Capt. Holmes brought them over in his catboat, "Annie," and when part way over a sudden violent squall nearly capsized the boat, Miss Webber sat erect and calm. Capt. Holmes, who had been nervous over the outcome, said he had never seen such sheer cool nerve. Although her fine clothes were badly damaged



Fresh water pond, Inn in background.

## GURNET

From page 16

she took it all in a sporting manner. It might be mentioned here that the Gurnet is a very poor place for an elaborate wardrobe.

In the autumn there were many sportsmen registered, taking advantage of the exceptional fine duck hunting. They included Charles Dyer, Bertram Noyes and Charles Dennie of Boston.

There were many other guests registered that first year, but it is not practical to list them all here.